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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR TURKISH FONMIN GUL'S JULY 24 VISIT TO WASHINGTON

REF: 02 ANKARA 6339

Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reason: 1.5 (b)(d).

1. (C) Summary: F.M. Gul comes to Washington as we try to pull Turkey into a more fully helpful role in Iraq. The last year has shaken the confidence of the Turkish public, politicians, and military in the strength of the relationship with the U.S., just as it has shaken our confidence in the Turks. While we have been able to manage the issue of the July 4 incident, it is likely to fester for a long time in the minds of many Turks as a humiliation to the military, and could thus continue to affect U.S.-Turkey security cooperation broadly. In part, our problems come from divergent views on Iraq, particularly the security threat from various possible development in northern Iraq. However, in large part they are also a function of Turkish domestic politics. The ruling AK Party is seen as a threat to the existing order of Turkey that the military and much of the Establishment is trying to defend -- and the military is seen as a barrier to the changes AK and others would like to make in Turkey. The relationship with the U.S., the reforms needed for the EU and even the range of Iraq issues have been approached, frequently, by both sides in the context of the relationship between the military/traditional Establishment and AK, rather than on their merits. In reacting to the July 4 incident, P.M. Erdogan and Gul maintained a measured approach, while the TGS, under pressure from military hard-liners, refused any responsibility and stirred national outrage. The implications of the internal political dynamic for the wider issue of GOT Iraq policy are considerable. Civilian authorities would like to complete a transformation of Iraq policy away from the historic northern-Iraq centered obsession and fear of a Kurdish state -- a change in focus that stems in part from efforts by the MFA and other civilian authorities to wrestle control over Turkey's Iraq policy from the Turkish military. Following on the July 18th visits of CMDRUSEUCOM and CMDRUSCENTCOM, we have cooperative perspectives for Iraq stabilization force, terror action, and greater transparency and liaison before us. This visit needs to reinforce the direction, but we cannot press hard on the stabilization force contribution at the risk of being counterproductive. It will also be important to present positive and operational response to Turkey's offers of civilian humanitarian assistance. End summary.

The Domestic Context

2. (C) Gul, Erdogan, and the rest of the AK leadership have maintained a measured approach to the incident in Iraq in order to protect our bilateral relationship and to press its proposed reform package to loosen the TGS's grip on Turkish policy. However, to keep their political opponents off balance, they have publicly been supportive of the military. The hard-liners saw the event as a way to resist AK's effort and weaken its standing by attacking it as an American "supporter." Thus, the AK stance contrasts starkly with the reaction from the military, President Sezer, and opposition CHP, all of whom have used the press to castigate both AK for being "too soft" and the U.S. for its actions. After the release of the joint statement the Turkish press focused on the absence of an apology.

3. (C) U.S.-Turkey tensions fit into a complex competition between AK and the military. They portray themselves as having opposed visions of Turkey's future. Within each group there are tensions too. There are increasing signs of discontent among hard-liners in the senior military leadership, who are trying to force TGS chief Ozkok into a more confrontational stance toward the USG as a way to rally nationalism and counter AK. The difference between the AK Government and the Establishment on this front highlights a basic gap in Turkey between those -- led in the first instance by the military hawks -- who support an order linked to a rigid, statist-oriented view of what Ataturk wanted for the Republic of Turkey, and those who say they want a more

open, EU candidacy-linked, conservative Turkey, with greater opportunity for Islamic influences, to prevail. In this political competition there are also question marks regarding AK's: 1) ultimate social, political, and economic intentions domestically; and 2) its ability to run a competent government and willingness to respond to U.S. interests. The domestic competition is often more important to the TGS or AK than the issues being addressed, and many U.S.-Turkey questions are dealt with as fodder as much as on their merits.

Turkish Military

14. (S) Contacts in the MFA, press, and among national security analysts think the Turkish military misjudged Turkey's equities in Iraq after the end of operations and that TGS's efforts to use the Turkmen issue as a wedge against U.S. policy was a mistake. TGS D/CHOD Buyukanit, regarded as one of the senior officers pushing a harder line against the US during the Iraq war, also admitted that the Turkish military had misplayed its hand on Iraq. While arguing that both sides had made mistakes and defending (without great conviction) TGS's attempts to persuade the Parliament to pass the March 1 troop deployment resolution, Buyukanit had said -- before the July 4 incident -- that TGS was ready to move forward with the U.S. TGS supported the recent Cabinet decree to allow the U.S. and other coalition partners to use Turkish bases and ports for operations consistent with UNSCR 1483, including a positive response in principle to EUCOM's request to station up to 10 tankers and 1 ISR aircraft at Incirlik in support of OEF and OIF operations (EUCOM is in the process of reviewing TGS's operating guidelines for the deployment and stationing of the aircraft, but we are taking a slow approach in the wake of the detention of TSF in Iraq).

15. (C) TGS asserts privately and publicly that it supports Turkey's EU candidacy and wants to adopt stances on important issues (i.e. non-military approach to PKK/KADEK) that would help Turkey vis-a-vis the EU. However, top military officers also have recently publicly criticized the EU and taken measures to delay EU-related reforms. Many continue to believe that TGS was behind President Sezer's recent decision to veto an article of the GOT's 6th EU-related reform package and that the Turkish military will continue to resist all efforts by AK to lessen the military's control over what it considers to be its sacred role in protecting Turkey's "secular" status and national security interests.

16. (S) On the TGS horizon is the August Supreme Military Council (YAS). Among the four-star ranks, both the Navy and Air Force commanders retire this year, as will the commanders of the First and Third Turkish Armies, and the National Security Council Secretary General. The YAS could allow Ozkok, who is beginning the second year of his four-year tour as Chief of the Turkish General Staff, the first real opportunity to shape his own leadership team. Last year, contrary to tradition, the outgoing chief made all the general officer assignment and promotion selections. Ozkok, however, may be constrained by the hard-liners and other traditionalists with whom he is contending on a number of issues.

Iraq: Signs of a Shift In Policy

17. (S) The detention of TSF by the U.S. military in northern Iraq on July 4 has raised suspicions on both sides of the other's intentions. CDR EUCOM Gen. Jones reiterated our concerns to Ozkok July 18; while Ozkok stuck to the TGS position on the issue, he added that he would punish any "lack of discipline" he found among the TSF elements involved; he added that visible cooperation was the best way to move ahead. While letting Gul know we want the matter behind us, we should reiterate to him that U.S. forces had solid information and found concrete evidence. We should also press for an outcome of the Iraq discussion which underscores that the U.S. and Turkey are jointly focused on Iraq's recovery and democratization country-wide.

18. (S) Turkey's civilian authorities would like to complete a transformation of Iraq policy away from the historic northern-Iraq centered obsession with border security, fear of a Kurdish state, and Turkish military presence towards a more Baghdad-oriented policy based primarily on trade and assistance. This change in focus, to the extent it has been

realized, appears to stem in part from efforts by the MFA and other civilian authorities to wrestle control over Turkey's Iraq policy from the Turkish military. During a recent one-on-one with the Ambassador, MFA U/S Ziyal said he had asked P.M. Erdogan after the end of combat operations in Iraq to transfer authority over the issue of northern Iraq (and Iraq) from the TGS to the MFA.

19. (SBU) The Turks have taken a number of concrete steps in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction since the Secretary's April visit to Turkey. Turkey has become a hub

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for facilitating the flow of humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq. The World Food Program has shipped 341,000 tons of food through Turkey since March. Turkey is also the world's biggest supplier (in value terms) to WFP. Turkey recently allowed an energy barter arrangement organized by Delta Petroleum to go forward. This will enable coalition authorities to supply essential energy supplies to the Iraqi people. Indeed, Turkey has an opportunity to build strong trade links with Iraq. During his Washington meetings in June, MFA U/S Ziyal raised Turkey's interest in building a second border crossing to relieve the burden on the Habur Gate (now handling some 2000 vehicles daily). Bottlenecks in processing vehicles continue on both sides of the border, with the KDP continuing to charge some (including UN) vehicles fees and the GOT carefully scrutinizing incoming trucks to limit fuel smuggling. The Turks have applied to reestablish THY commercial air links with Iraq when that becomes feasible. We hope that the visit will allow us to begin to operationalize further civilian reconstruction cooperation as offered by Ziyal that CPA views favorably.

Relations with Iraqi Kurds

10. (C) The MFA has portrayed the mid-May visit to Iraq by a three-person MFA delegation as improving Turkish-Kurdish relations. The Turkish delegation found both KDP leader Barzani and PUK leader Talabani willing to take concrete steps to improve relations. The MFA delegation proposed a number of confidence-building measures designed to improve relations, including: (1) more equitable and transparent duties charged to Turkish businesses crossing the border; (2) softening of rhetoric between Kurdish and Turkmen groups in Iraq; (3) establishment of Turkish-Kurdish joint ventures in the north; and (4) establishment of "one-stop shopping" in key northern Iraqi cities for Turkish business groups. Barzani reportedly committed in principle to taking steps to improve Kurdish-Turkmen relations, but said he could not "change course overnight." He said the KDP would explore taking incremental steps toward improving relations, and said that that much would depend on the actions of the Turkmen. The KDP and PUK leaders also reportedly heeded Turkey's request to refrain from calling for the end of the Peace Monitoring Force and the withdrawal of the Turkish participating troops at least until the end of the year to give the Turkish military time to "feel more comfortable" with the overall security situation on the ground in Iraq.

11. (C) The GOT remains concerned about what it perceives to be undue Kurdish influence on coalition authorities in northern Iraq. They have strongly objected to coalition plans to disarm all groups except the Kurds, which they believe gives the Kurds too much power over the other ethnic groups, particularly the Turkmen.

Turkmen in Iraq

12. (C) While the GOT remains concerned about the fate of Turkmen, the frequency and tone of Turkish "complaints" of mistreatment of the Turkmen by other Iraqi groups have declined significantly. GOT officials appear to have made a conscious decision to change the way they talk about the Turkmen. The nearly daily reports of Kurdish efforts to marginalize Turkmen have been replaced by statements about the importance of ensuring proportionate representation for all Iraqi groups in local and central decision-making bodies. The MFA regularly talks about the need for the Iraqi Turkmen Front to become a real political party, to not be seen as a tool of Ankara, and to integrate itself into the political process in Iraq. The GOT continues to look to the U.S. to help ensure proper Turkmen representation on key leadership councils in the north as well as in the IIA.

PKK/KADEK

13. (S) The Turks remain interested in working with us on collaborative planning to address the PKK/KADEK presence in the north; TGS Chief Ozkok reiterated this July 18 to CDR CENTCOM Gen. Abizaid. Nevertheless, recent developments might complicate the modalities of such cooperation. The GOT's draft law to reintegrate PKK/KADEK militants and their leadership in exchange for a PKK/KADEK agreement to lay down their arms and return to Turkey appears now to have been watered down owing to resistance from parts of the military and the traditionally hard-line civilian staff of the Turkish NSC. In the wake of widespread press speculation -- fomented in the first instance by a well-known conduit for hard-line military views -- the MFA has expressed concern to us about Iraq Governing Council member Mahmoud Othman's alleged PKK/KADEK ties. It is likely that Gul will raise this with the Secretary. We have not uncovered any information suggesting his support for PKK/KADEK and have told the GOT to share the evidence.

Stabilization Force for Iraq

14. (C) TGS Chief Ozkok and MFA U/S Ziyal told CDR CENTCOM Gen. Abiziad and Gen Jones July 18 that they welcomed the chance to begin thinking in earnest about the modalities of a Turkish contribution to the Stabilization Force -- in Ozkok's view, preferably under NATO auspices -- but warned that public opinion and politics could make approval difficult. Given the sensitivities involved, we should avoid creating the impression with Gul that we are pushing too aggressively on this front. Rather, we need to let the planning process move forward towards the right answer from the Turks.

Middle East Roadmap

15. (C) The GOT wants to use its excellent relations with Israelis and the Palestinians as a vehicle for its larger ambitions in the region. P.M. Erdogan told President Bush May 14 he would send F.M. Gul to Israel and Palestine "soon;" we understand from an AK party deputy chairman that a Gul visit is now more front and center given AK's recognition of the importance of such a visit for Turkey's relations with the U.S. TGS CHOD General Ozkok went to Tel Aviv July 3 and Israeli President Katzav visited Turkey July 8-9. Israeli F.M. and DefMin have been to Ankara in the last two months as well. An MFA official also has told us the idea of supporting Abu Mazen at the expense of Arafat "poses certain problems for the AK party and P.M. Erdogan." We have had similar intimations from AK M.P.s. During his meetings in Washington, Gul expects to hear the current status of play and Administration views of how Turkey can best contribute.

Syria/Iran

16. (C) The Turks remain disturbed by what they see as unfair criticism from Washington that they are "soft" on Syria and Iran. GOT officials have argued that Washington's perception that Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran was inconsistent with USG policy were "totally unfounded" and denied that Turkey was pursuing a strategic partnership with either country. The GOT argues that Turkey shares the same values and goals in the Middle East as the U.S. (stability, democracy and prosperity), and Gul delivered a call for democracy and reform in the Islamic world at the June OIC Summit in Tehran. MFA has gone so far as to argue that the U.S. message on Syria that we conveyed to FM Gul prior to his May visit to Syria was "softer" than the message Gul delivered. Turkey shares our concern about Iranian support for terrorists (including the PKK/KADEK) and WMD programs). If the GOT's perception is accurate and Washington does believe that Turkey is "soft" on Syria and Iran, we recommend that the Department make clear what Turkish actions have led to this conclusion and what Turkey needs to do to prove that it shares U.S. concerns and objectives regarding Syria and Iran. Turkey should be cautioned that Iranian destabilization tactics in the region will be met with equal and appropriate countermeasures and the USG expects its full support should events come to this. On this latter point, however, we can expect Gul, who sees Iran as a much tougher nut to crack than Iraq, to be ultra-cautious about endorsing

active measures against Iran.

17. (C) IAEA chief Mohammed El Baradei's findings as a result of his latest visit to Tehran to discuss the capabilities of the recently tested Iranian surface-to-surface Shahab-3 ballistic missiles is a potential source of worry for both the GOT and the US. Turkey shares the USG's concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program, and has fully supported the USG in its call for total Iranian compliance with IAEA's inspection process and safeguard requirements. Nevertheless, Turkey exhibits a preference for appearing to cooperate with Iran while, at the same time, seeking to hide behind USG cover to constrain Iran's nuclear capabilities. It will be important to remind Turkey of the necessity to present a public, unified stance regarding Iranian nuclear capabilities.

Cyprus

18. (C) Although the AK government has retreated from its much more forward-leaning initial approach in the face of concerted political pressure from the military, presidency, MFA bureaucracy, and "TRNC President" ReDenktash, senior AK officials tell us this was a tactical retreat and Erdogan intends to solve the problem before Cyprus's entry into the EU May 1, 2004. AK owes Denktas nothing politically, and we understand that the GOT is willing to use the Annan III Plan as the basis for renewed negotiations, but wants adjustments on land and the numbers involved in population shifts between the two sides. It would be useful to emphasize to Gul the benefits to U.S.-Turkish relations from GOT acceleration of the negotiations and a settlement.

Armenia

19. (C) The AK government is much less wedded to Aliyev and tying improvement of relations with Armenia to a settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh, but remains under sniper fire from entrenched anti-Armenian interests. AK officials tell us they recognize the trade and development benefits to Turkey from opening the border. We understand there may be secret F.M.-level contacts continuing at this time. However, AK officials have made it clear that passage of any Armenian genocide language, even by only one chamber of Congress, will set progress back significantly.

EU Candidacy

20. (C) Since coming to power in the November elections, the ruling AK Party has made EU membership a top priority. The GOT in January adopted two EU-related legislative reform packages designed to crack down on torture and remove barriers to free expression, association, and fair trial. Parliament adopted another package June 19, the sixth package in the past two years, and the GOT plans to pass a seventh package before a parliamentary recess in August. Our contacts have confirmed press reports that the seventh package will be focused on limiting the military's political influence, including measures that will change the structure of the National Security Council. However, the pro-EU, pro-reform AK government faces opposition from nationalistic opponents in the bureaucracy and parts of the military. In several instances, bureaucratic institutions have undermined reform legislation by developing highly restrictive implementing regulations. For example, Parliament lifted restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, but the subsequent Radio and Television Board regulation set strict time limits and restricted such broadcasts to state-owned media outlets. In addition, our European contacts say that while the GOT has made impressive legal reforms, Turkey's standing in the EU has also been undermined by recent actions such as the closing of the pro-Kurdish HADEP party and indictment of its sister party, DEHAP, and the recent police raid of the Human Rights Association's Ankara offices.

Child Custody

21. (C) The Hague Convention on Child Abduction requires the expeditious return of a child to its country of residence so

the courts in that country can decide on custody. Turkey has been a signatory to the Hague Convention since August 2000. During that period of time, we are unaware of any children being returned to any country without the agreement of the abducting parent. There are systemic problems: 1) Court meets for 10 minutes monthly and does not focus on Hague issues; 2) judges do not understand the Hague Convention requirement and rule on custody rather than Hague issues, thereby requiring a lengthy appeal process; 3) the legal process lasts between 2-3 years total; and 4) the Ministry of Interior does not focus resources on finding the abducted child and the parent. The US currently has four applications pending for return of a child to the US. In one case the child has now been in Turkey over a year due to the slow court process and the judge used that delay to rule the child should stay in Turkey. In another case, the Government of Turkey has been unable to locate a child abducted to Turkey in October 2002. Due to physical abuse by the abducting father, the Turkish court ordered the child returned to the mother immediately. The Interior Ministry places a low priority on these types of cases and has been unable to locate the child.

Human Trafficking

123. (C) We have discussed with the GOT at various levels the need to show progress on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) by September in order to avoid facing sanctions as a consequence of Turkey's Tier III ranking in the TIP report. GOT officials have been highly defensive on the issue, insisting that the report is unfair and that they are already taking adequate measures.

Article 98

124. (C) GOT contacts have repeatedly maintained that, in principle, they share our concerns about the International Criminal Court (ICC) and favor reaching an Article 98 agreement with us. However, given their status as an EU candidate country, they believe it is not in their interest to sign an agreement until the U.S. and EU resolve their differences on the issue.

The Economy

125. (SBU) The economy is sending mixed signals. On the one hand, there are solid signs of growth and declining inflation. On the other hand, after having rallied strongly in the aftermath of the Iraq operation, particularly once the USG announced it would provide \$1 billion in financial assistance, markets have stalled due to the lack of investor confidence in the government's commitment to reform. Markets are particularly concerned about continuing delays in the Government's implementation of its IMF-backed reform program. As a result, interest rates on the extremely large government debt remain high, and the economy remains vulnerable to a sharp depreciation of the currency, which would put the entire program and economic stability at risk. We need to stress the importance of Turkey flawlessly implementing its commitments under the IMF-backed program (to the IMF). Disbursement of USD 1 billion in U.S. assistance -- which Gul might raise -- is contingent on continued implementation of the IMF program.

126. (SBU) In June, MFA U/S Ziyal and U/S Larson agreed to convene a fall meeting of the Economic Partnership Commission (EPC), which was established in early 2002 to find ways to enhance the bilateral economic relationship. The meeting will be an opportunity to press a broad economic agenda including structural reform, reduction of trade barriers improving the investment climate, and enhancing regional economic cooperation.

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